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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001226

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G/TIP MEGAN HALL AND SCA/RA JESSICA MAZZONE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: PROSECUTOR GENERAL PUBLISHES MAJOR  
TIP REPORT IN STATE-RUN PRESS

REF: TASHKENT 900

¶1. (U) On October 17 Uzbekistan Prosecutor General Rashitjon Qodirov prominently published a major 3,000 word report on trafficking in persons (TIP) in the state-controlled newspaper "Narodnoe Slovo" (People's Word). This is the first high-profile action by Qodirov in his capacity as the Chairman of the National Inter-Agency Commission on TIP, which was established this summer in accordance with the comprehensive anti-TIP law adopted by Uzbekistan this March (reftel). The article also ran in the Uzbek language paper "Inson va Qonun" (Humanity and Law) on October 21, and was picked up by the BBC and Agence France Presse.

¶2. (U) The report included updated statistics on human trafficking in Uzbekistan for the first nine months of 2008, a remarkably fast release date that shows the Government of Uzbekistan has gotten much better organized in tracking the problem. Through the first three quarters of the year a total of 1,449 Uzbek citizens were trafficked, of which 1,283 (88.5 percent) were men and 166 (11.5 percent) were women. Twenty-eight of the victims were minors, according to the report. This publicly challenges the widely held assertion in Uzbekistan that mostly women are trafficked, which will help raise awareness in a country where up to three million mostly illegal migrants of the population of 27 million are working abroad. It also confirms that, while sex trafficking has gotten the bulk of the attention from the international community, labor trafficking of male workers to Kazakhstan and Russia occurs on a much larger scale.

¶3. (U) The report also included fresh data on law enforcement efforts to combat TIP. In the first nine months of 2008, 436 criminal cases were opened and 339 traffickers "were brought to account" and prosecuted. The offenders consisted of 203 men and 136 women; the disproportionately high number of females arrested likely reflects a domestic law enforcement focus on sex exploitation cases, whereas the scope of labor exploitation among men is only now coming to light. Male victims may also be recruited in larger numbers after they are abroad, so there may be fewer opportunities to target and arrest recruiters in Uzbekistan. (Note: This is the most extensive and rapidly released data we have seen on any topic

in Uzbekistan, which is likely driven by a desire to demonstrate to the international community -- especially the U.S. -- that there are robust efforts to prosecute offenders. End note.)

14. (U) Qodirov mentions in the report that "as the main route, criminals use bypassing roads into Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and from there they traffic victims into foreign countries using forged documents." He added that "there is a need for taking a set of measures aimed at fighting trafficking, eliminating its causes and conditions, and minimizing its consequences." The report recounts the efforts Uzbekistan has taken in the past year, including the adoption of a law, formation of the National Inter-agency Commission, adoption of a national action plan, adoption of the UN Protocol on TIP, and the introduction of criminal code amendments that strengthened penalties. He noted that the March law requires victim assistance programs and indicated that implementation of this provision is underway. In the meantime, the report said that hotlines have already been established in the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection as well as the State Customs Committee "in order to provide public access to accurate information."

Comment:  
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15. (U) The published report from the Prosecutor General, including real-time data, demonstrates that the recently created National Inter-Agency Commission on TIP appears to be

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off to a fast start in getting its arms around the issue and coordinating a policy response. The prominent coverage of the victim figures, prosecution statistics, and background information in the state-controlled press also contributes to greater awareness among the general public about the TIP issue.

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